

## The Rise of the Papacy: Church and State

"In my humble person St. Peter may be recognized and honoured, in whom abides the care of all the shepherds, together with the charge of the sheep commended to him, and whose dignity is not abated even in so unworthy an heir."

--Pope Leo the Great (d. 461 AD)

**Peter:** The understanding was that Peter was the first bishop of Rome and all subsequent bishops/popes are his successors and that Jesus gave Peter authority over the entire church. In Matthew 16, Christ asks the apostles who they think he is and Peter responds, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus responds, "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church...I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." Super hanc petram is a play on words; petram means rock and also the name Peter. In the early church there were 5 patriarchates: Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople. After Constantine's Edict of Milan, the church adopted the governmental structure of the Empire, geographical provinces ruled by bishops; therefore bishops of large, important cities gained power. Rome is historically important as the site of Peter's ministry and martyrdom and final resting place and then becomes important when the Church's fortunes become linked with that of the Empire through Constantine. When the Empire falls and the western and eastern empires are divided Rome becomes the bastion of civilization in the new world.

**Early Church Fathers:** Augustine saw the church and state as allies, but said that the spiritual power of the church was above temporal power. Ambrose saw the church and state as allies and said the state was bound to protect the church.

**Damascus I (366-384):** He was elected in October 366 though there was an Arian group who supported another candidate Ursinus. The Emperor Valentinian supported Damascus and banished Ursinus. Damascus fought against the heresies of Apollinarianism and Arianism, presiding over two Roman synods in 368 and 369 and sending his legates to the important Council of Constantinople in 381, all of which condemned these and other heresies. He commissioned the Latin Bible, known as the Vulgate from his secretary St. Jerome and was the first to use the title the "Apostolic See." In 381, during Damasus' reign, the Council of Constantinople granted the bishop of Constantinople "primacy of honor next after the Bishop of Rome."

**Siricius (384-399):** Siricius was the first to apply the term "pope" to himself and the first to issue a formal decretal - a ruling with binding legal precedent - on disputes in the Church. From him we have the idea that "in all his decrees the pope speaks with the consciousness of his supreme ecclesiastical authority and of his pastoral care over all the churches."

**Innocent I (402-416)** During Innocent's pontificate, the Emperor Honorius moved the capital of the Western Empire from Rome to Ravenna, in northwest Italy, in 402. The center of power shifted from Rome. Alaric and the Visigoths took advantage of this weakness and the absence of the emperor to attack Rome in 410.

However, Innocent did advance the idea of the supremacy of the pope further by introducing the concept of "primacy of jurisdiction." Replying to African bishops who had appealed to the pope to support them against Pelagianism, Innocent wrote:

...nothing which was done even in the most remote and distant provinces should be taken as finally settled unless it came to the notice of this See, that any just pronouncement might be confirmed by all the authority of this See, and that the other churches might from thence gather what they should teach."

**Leo the Great (Saint)** (b. c. 400) Pope 440-61: The "master builder of the papacy", he took the title "pontifex maximus", chief priest used by the Roman emperor state cult. He convened the Council of Chalcedon and battled the Monophysite heresy that denied the dual nature of Christ, at once human and divine. Previously, councils had been convened by the emperor. He claimed jurisdiction over Africa, Spain and Gaul and Emperor Valentinian confirmed his authority in the West. Unlike the pope in 410, Leo negotiated with Attila the Hun and kept his army from sacking Rome in 452 and again in 455 saved Rome being burned by the Vandals.

**Gelasius I (492-96)** He was the first to use the title the "Vicar of Christ" and articulated in the Gelasian doctrine in a letter written to the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius in 494, the relationship between secular and spiritual powers in temporal (earthly) government. He advocated a system of joint and equal responsibility between church and state and his letter was frequently referred to later in support of both papal superiority and royal autonomy.

**Gregory the Great (b. c.540):** Pope 590-604 Gregory was from an aristocratic Roman family, and in administration probably as a prefect. He leaves his post to become a monk and established 7 monasteries on the estates he inherits from his family. He is summoned by the pope to become a deacon and eventually becomes papal ambassador. On the death of Pope Pelagius II in 590 he is unanimously and reluctantly elected pope. He is the first to articulate and work out a system of charitable works for the papacy. He called himself the "steward of the poor". He reformed the administrative functions of the papacy. He sent Augustine to England in 596 to convert the English, resulting in the famous story about the Angles/angels. All we know of St. Benedict comes from his writings. While he probably did not compose any chants, Gregorian chant takes its name from him and flourished under his direction. Because of his monastic background he was a strong promoter of monasticism. Anticipating the iconoclast controversy, he criticized the condemnation of religious paintings calling them the "books of the unlearned." His view of church and state was that the emperor was the temporal lord and protector of the

church, but the pope held primacy in Christendom, though the patriarch in the East was senior.

**Donation of Pepin 756:** Pepin the Short, the father of Charlemagne, donates land to the church. This important alliance comes to full fruition in Charlemagne who is crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day in the year 800.

**Donation of Constantine:** This document claimed that Constantine, on his deathbed gave his lands and authority to the bishop of Rome.

Lorenzo Valla proves through his study of the document that it is an 8<sup>th</sup> c. forgery and published a tract in 1440 on this.

### **The Investiture Controversy**

**Gregory VII (Hildebrand) Pope 1073-85** The Gregorian reforms sought to clarify the lines of authority in the church, passed through the pope, the successor of Peter, through the cardinals and metropolitans to the bishops. A leader of the great ecclesiastical reforms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, he was concerned with simony (the sale of clerical offices), clerical celibacy, and lay investiture, the laity appointing their own people to clerical offices. Landlords would appoint their own people to hold church offices with income to control them, sometimes even their own serfs. Gregory's reforming impulses come to a head in a series of sometimes violent conflicts known as the Investiture Controversy. Throughout Christendom, emperors and kings felt they were free and had a right to appoint bishops. Gregory said "I am not custom, but truth," and issued a papal decree in 1075 forbidding lay investiture. The investing of bishops was really about the deeper question of authority—who had it and who had the right to it. From the rulers' viewpoint, they needed to have a say in the appointment of bishops who were great feudal lords with vast lands, monies and servants. The papal stance was that laymen should not be involved in church appointments. In his *Dictatus Papae*, Gregory makes 2 arguments that the pope was superior to the Emperor and had the right to depose him, and that the pope was superior to all other metropolitans and bishops in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The conflict was dramatically resolved in a showdown between Gregory and the young German King Henry IV. The king attempted to depose Gregory and he in turn deposed the king, excommunicating him and freeing his subjects from their oaths of allegiance to him. Those subjects and political opponents of the king quickly turned the situation to their advantage and turned on the king, but he escaped them and went to confront Gregory in Canossa, where he was made to beg absolution from the pope, barefoot in the snow. Gregory's high moment of power did not last, Henry regained power, appointed another pope Clement III and Gregory died in exile. But he ushered the strong papacy of the central Middle Ages, which claimed supremacy over all matters, temporal and spiritual.

**Alexander III (b. 1105) Pope 1159-81:** Professor of Law and canon lawyer at the University of Bologna until election as cardinal and then as pope. Election opposed by German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa who supported a rival candidate, the "anti-pope" in the Great Schism, Cardinal Octavian as Pope Victor IV. Alexander flees to France in 1162 and 1166, but returns after Frederick is defeated by Lombards and forces him to

make peace in Venice in 1177. He was a supporter of Thomas Beckett and tries to mediate between Beckett and Henry II.

**Henry II and Thomas Beckett:** Henry and Beckett start as friends and indeed Henry appoints Beckett as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1163. But Beckett starts to take his duties more seriously than Henry perhaps intended and they come into conflict over the application of canon law (church law) versus secular law. In 1163 over 100 murders and lesser crimes were committed by the clergy and the harshest punishment was defrocking. Henry finds this outrageous, but Beckett maintains that clerics should not be punished by secular courts. Beckett refuses to bow to the king and flees to France in 1170 where he remains for 6 years. He and Henry try to reconcile but he finds that Henry has had 3 bishops crown his heir, a duty Beckett should have performed. Beckett continued refusal to bow infuriates Henry and he supposedly says, “Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest.” Four knights do just that by murdering Beckett in his own cathedral and Henry is made to do public penance and go on pilgrimage and the site of Beckett’s murder quickly becomes a great place of pilgrimage. Beckett is acknowledged as a saint and martyr.

### **The Height of Papal Power**

**Innocent III (1198-1216)** The rule of Pope Innocent III represents the zenith of papal power; he was one of the strongest and most effective of all medieval popes. At his inauguration, Innocent quoted Jeremiah 1:10 in reference to himself: “See, today I appoint you over nations...” He also taught that the Pope stands between God and man as a mediator and vicar of Christ.

He was a zealous reformer. He presided over the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 which articulated such doctrines as clerical celibacy and transubstantiation. The Pope also showed his political power on several occasions: he caused King Philip II to take back his queen because he had unjustly divorced her; he caused another king to get a divorce because his wife was too closely related to him; and King Peter of Aragon received his kingdom as a fief from the pope.

**Boniface VIII (1294-1303)** In the papal bulls *Clericos Laicos* (1296) and *Unam Sanctam* (1302) he taught that the pope held both the temporal and spiritual swords, meaning that he is the ultimate authority in both realms.

In his capacity of spiritual leader, Pope Boniface instituted the first Holy Year with the Jubilee of 1300: he announced a “full and copious pardon of all their sins” for all who reverently visited the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul in that year. The papacy made a great deal of money from the pilgrims who poured into Rome as a result. Boniface also oversaw a great deal of restoration of churches, revived the Vatican Library and was apparently a great lover of the arts.

Boniface was not as successful in the temporal realm. His attempts to resolve conflicts in Naples, Venice, Genoa and Tuscany were failures. In 1296 Boniface issued *Clericos laicos*, which threatened excommunication for anyone who taxed clergy, but both Philip of

France and Edward I of England wanted to tax the clergy to finance their military campaigns so Philip put an embargo on export of jewels from his domain. This deprived the pope of much of his revenue, so Boniface backed down; saying an exception to the non-taxation rule was for “defense” in “dire need”

After another run-in in 1301, Philip's minister said Philip's sword was made of steel but the pope's was made only of words. A few months later, Boniface issued the Unam sanctam, declaring that every human being is subject to Roman pope.

Undeterred, King Philip prepared to depose Boniface on grounds of illegal election, heresy, simony and immorality. Several Roman churches had called for this in 1297 as well. Boniface was 86 and summering in foothills of Apennine Mountains at Anagni, his birthplace, Philip's troops broke into the aged pope's bedroom and kept him prisoner for three days. The people of Anagni rescued him and he was escorted back to Rome, but Boniface died within a few weeks of the ordeal. He was buried in a marble tomb in St. Peter's Basilica. The ignoble end to Boniface's reign is significant: it "marks the first open rejection of papal spiritual dominance by the rising national monarchies of the West."

### **Crisis in the Papacy**

**The Avignon Papacy or Babylonian Captivity (1309-77):** In 1309 King Philip IV of France invites the pope to Avignon and he never leaves. The center of Papal power is suddenly no longer in Rome and a secular monarch has demonstrated that he has more power than the papacy.

Great Schism: (1378-1417) Papacy returns from Avignon France to Rome. The majority of cardinals are pressured to elect the Italian archbishop of Bari as Pope Urban VI, who quickly loses support due to his cruel and autocratic nature. The next year, Urban election is declared invalid and Cardinal Robert of Geneva, supported by the French, is elected Pope Clement VII and moves again to Avignon. This divides Europe; Avignon is supported by France, Scotland, Castile, Aragon, and some German principalities, with the Emperor, England, Scandinavia and most Italians supporting Rome.

A university movement in Paris known as conciliarism tries to mend the break and a council meets in Pisa in 1409 to depose the two popes and elect a new one, Pope Alexander V, archbishop of Milan. They do not have enough support and the end result is 3 popes. The Council of Constance is called in 1417 and in November Pope Martin V is elected, who is strong enough and has enough support to end the crisis.